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The poverty of Conservative policy

by Will Nicholls

Canada is quick to speak out against human rights violations abroad, and to brag about its foreign aid to combat poverty around the world. It would be nice if the government would do the same at home. Given the desperate living conditions of most First Nations across the country it is surprising that the \$5.7 billion in foreign aid isn't matched here to lessen the gap between non-Aboriginal Canadians and First Nations. Instead, the 2.5% of the 2012 budget (\$165.30 per Canadian) devoted went elsewhere.

But is this an example of racism, a lack of respect or studied indifference on Canada's government? It doesn't seem to make a difference which party was in power because this has been going on for decades.

Two recent examples are front and centre. The first is the First Nations Education Act and the recent stats on murdered and missing Aboriginal women.

In the first example, the Education Act was developed without input from Canada's Aboriginal population or leadership. This legislation has been put on ice as a result of the outcry against it that led to the resignation of AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo. Too often, non-Aboriginal people have been deciding what is best for us without consideration for what we want or say we need. For something such as this to work, there needs to be a feeling of ownership and that is where Canada failed. Many felt it was not in the best interests of First Nations and rightly so.

Remarks by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt comments on the topic are deeply disturbing. Valcourt condemned "rogue chiefs" and said they didn't represent the majority of First Nations in Canada. He added, "I trust that the good, hard-working chiefs will speak up."

These remarks are ignorant and ethnocentric and a real example of not-so-subtle racism. I remember a non-Native in Montreal who used to remark that Frnest Webb. Neil Diamond and I were some of the "good ones." He thought most Natives were drunken welfare bums. Valcourt's comments are no different. They reinforce a perception of "good" and "bad" Indians the public mind. Good Indians, of course, are those who accept his decisions without question, much less input.

The second example is the report released by the RCMP in the middle of May confirming 1,181 documented cases of murdered and missing Aboriginal women over the past 30 years in Canada.

"The Harper government was quick to respond to the recent crisis in Nigeria following the tragic abduction of school children yet refuses to commit to an inquiry into the disappearance of hundreds of Aboriginal women and girls despite the growing number of cases documented by police," said Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which represents 49 First Nations in Ontario.

A Parliamentary committee spent a year studying violence against Aboriginal women and issued a report on March 7. Analysts at the Library of Parliament recommended to the committee that a public inquiry be undertaken, but that fact and the recommendation itself were omitted by the Conservative-dominated committee when it tabled the report in the House.

Postmedia columnist Stephen Maher commented on May 3, "I don't think he would talk like that if we were talking about 1,026 dead white women."

Maher adequately summed it up in that

So are the government's actions or lack thereof an example of racism or a lack of respect for its Aboriginal population and its own principles? That is for you to decide.

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Sophie H. Bosum, Grandchild Leah Bosum, Abel Bosum & Cyprien Caron

photo by: Irene B. Quinn



Joshua's laws of summer fashion

by Joshua Iserhoff

I'd like to begin with shout-outs to everyone at Peawanuk, Attawapiskat, Kashechewan. Fort Albany Moosenee Factory (combined) and finally, Marina Lebrun in Timmins, Ontario. Air Creebec flies into all these places and carries this wonderful magazine. I have never been to any of these northern Cree communities but I will plan a trip soon. Hopefully when I go, I'll get to see my friends James Hookimaw and Theresa Spence! I've befriended the frontman from Midnight Shine on Instagram so I think I'll have posse when I go. I wonder if they have a fiddle dance competition or a music festival. I'll fire off an email to Nicole N. Raeuben because she knows everything. Jish-stug. Will keep you posted!

Summer has finally graced its presence upon us, and that means open-toe season is here! Let the toes rejoice and be well groomed. The horrid fashion faux pas of sandals and socks is a serious infringement on good taste. I don't know why this is even allowed. There should be a resolution passed at the CNG AGA. I bet China has such law! If so, Tina Petawabano will tell us.

Going back to open toe, I think everyone should experience a pedicure once in a lifetime or every other month like I do - except summer when it's once a month for this fashionable fella! When in the Cree Nation of Val-d'Or, go see Nathalie Fréchette at Carte Blanche in her salon located on 3rd Avenue (inside the RBC building). She does waxing too! Men, waxing your back is always good and your lady might even like you more ;-) That's if you are mixed because most Cree men don't have chest or back hair! Nathalie is not an eyesore and she

can do wonders for your summer look. Trust me on this!

I am always on the look out for fresh. up-and-coming things, people and trends. I must say that sometimes I feel there is famine of these three categories. That ended when I started following this Cree fabulosity on Instagram. Patricia Ashley is a make-up artist originally from Mistissini but who now resides in Habsville. This is another lady who can do wonders for your look and confidence. I just love our young people following their passion. Follow Ashley's Instagram handle "trishaashleigh" and be floored.

Speaking of fresh, there is a sound that has been covering the Cree Nation and the world by the enormous success of the N'we Jinan Eeyou Istchee album! I don't know how to put this but I went into the ugly cry several times while listening to our youth shining through music! I believe that our youth will change our history.

Politics has overshadowed our culture, language and arts. I think the time has come when our youth shall bring in a new sound, a new wave in our midst. We have heard that through the N'we linan album. I am eternally happy of the new beauty, sound and eclectic personas that make our territory a great one. I encourage you all to download the album on iTunes. It's that great. Big props to music/producer extraordinaire David Hodges for inspiring our young peeps!

From the northern communities in Ontario to ours in Quebec, we all have great and exceptional youth, let's keep encouraging them to be the best they can be! Just a reminder: keep them toes fresh.

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IYIYUU AYIMUUN EDITOR













Building solutions

Governments meet to devise solutions for Val-d'Or's homeless

by Amy German

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre along with other stakeholders in the city's homelessness issue met with representatives from three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – on May 26 to discuss various city proposals for its most vulnerable citizens. It was also an opportunity for those working on the frontlines with the homeless to voice their concerns when it came to harmonious social cohabitation.

Also participating were workers from La Piaule and Le Dotoir (both shelters for the homeless), the CSSS (provincial health and social services centres), the Sûreté du Québec and the frontline workers group.

One of the proposals is to rent a space on 3rd Avenue in Val-d'Or that could serve as a day centre for the city's itinerant substance abusers whose issues prevent them from accessing other programs and services.

At the same time, according to Edith Cloutier, Executive Director of the VDNFC, another proposal put forth is for a summer police cadet program to join forces with the city's frontline workers so that they could walk their beats together. This would mean that police could be on hand so that citizens and businesses could get immediate assistance when there is an issue with the homeless.

"Police officers are there to enforce the law whereas frontline workers are there to support the homeless person and help them when they are in distress. They also provide them with syringes and condoms and provide them with an ear to listen to them when they need it," said Cloutier.



"If you have the police standing there while the frontline worker is handing a syringe to a drug addict and he shoots up, he is committing a crime and the police is right there and the link of trust is destroyed."

While Cloutier understands the concerns being expressed by the community or the economic pressure being put on those in politics, her position is that the politicians should be joining forces with the community workers because together they could be more effective.

She said the meeting ended with a resolution for all parties to get a better understanding of the issue of homelessness and to meet again on lune 13.

It was with this in mind however that Cloutier and her team at the VDNFC put out a press release to serve as a reminder that those who represent the region must also stand up for all their constituents and that includes the homeless.

According to Cloutier, it may be better to stop questioning how

those on the frontlines are doing their jobs to ensure that those in business stay safe, and to communicate to the public just how these organizations are doing their jobs and how effective that has been.

While there are arguments from the business community that the streets are unsafe and people are scared in the downtown area, Cloutier says if that message is reinforced, all it does is tell the public that there is a lack of coordination and nobody is doing anything about this issue.

"It has people saying that our organizations are getting this money and failing to use it properly. We need to change the political discourse to show what is actually working and that we care about everyone. We care about having a safe downtown and quality of life for everyone. We want the businesses in downtown Val-d'Or to be open but we also want quality of life for all citizens, including the homeless," said Cloutier.



Along the river

A people's march says no to tar-sands pipeline

by Nathan McDonnell

On a Saturday morning in early May in the sleepy bayside village of Cacouna, mist floats dreamily in the broad skies and winds of the St. Lawrence River. We wake from our sleeping bags at a youth centre to share a soup breakfast before the longest walk of our lives -34 days, 700 kilomtres, Cacouna to Kanehsatà:ke.

We are La Marche des Peuples pour la Terre Mère (The March of the Peoples for Mother Earth) and our numbers vary between 50 and 70. After a press conference and an Indigenous smoke ceremony, the food and luggage is loaded in cars and bicycle "chariots" and the march begins, banners in hand and songs in the air.

We marched as a statement against Energy East, a proposed \$12 billion chain of pipelines spanning Canada from the notorious tar sands of Alberta to ports in Quebec and New Brunswick. This would be the largest individual crude-oil pipeline in North America and it would dramatically scale up Canada's oil sands industry by 40%, a daily 1.1 million barrels of dirty bitumen, mostly for foreign export. project is proposed by Transcanada, the same company behind the infamous Keystone XL Pipeline, a project that NASA scientists say would mean game over for the Earth's climate.

Across the St. Lawrence River from the famous whale-watching village of Tadoussac, Cacouna is a deepsea port where oil-shipping facilities will be constructed adjacent to a rare beluga whale nursery. Seismic activity and geotechnical drilling is occurring this spring during the belugas' calving. It's like mining next to a hospital maternity ward.

As an act of defiance to this significant expansion of Canada's petroleum industry, we are marching along the proposed route of the pipeline, from Cacouna through the cities of Rivièredu-Loup, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières and Montreal to the Mohawk community of Kanehsatà:ke. We are speaking to communities, doing performances, hearing from locals and engaging with media to build the citizen campaign Coule pas chez-nous (Don't Spill at Our Place).

We are like nomads, living by the swing of the sun and the flow of the river, eating the food that we carry. Cars honk in support and our conversations stretch out like the road before us.

The march has had strong involvement and support from the First Nations and Métis peoples. Traditional prayers and lectures from Elders have been offered at various places. We have also been generously supported with accommodation by community centres, Cegeps, schools and churches. One night in a women's centre, another night below the cathedral of Trois-Rivières, another by a farm campfire under a full moon.

Regular public performances featured a variety of slam poetry, theatre, guitars, singing and circus. A common feature is the poetry and song of Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, an Innu from Pessamit who is an important spokesperson and organizer of the march.

Ever present with the march has been the natural beauty of Quebec along the St. Lawrence, where sea and river wrestle between the Appalachian and Laurentian mountain ranges and the tides turn to the moods of Grandmother Moon. It is a place where whales famously come to birth and clouds of uncountable geese pass by on their epic Arctic migration.



Protesters march through Trois Rivieres

I have seen a beaver, a frog, a fox, and even an owl. Horses excitedly gallop at our passing and a falcon followed us in Kamouraska.

Such natural beauty has been a reminder of what is at stake, of what is being defended. So too has been the countless stories of the people who live along the river - farmers in their fields, tractors on the roads, people in their gardens or driving to work or eating in outdoor terraces. They pause for a second and stare as quotidian village life is punctured by this traveling circus, singing, smiling, youthful.

The march will reach Kanehsatà:ke on June 12. From there, we will march to Ottawa from June 15-22.

More information: www.peuplespourlaterremere.ca

Happy Aboriginal Day!

At Goldcorp, we are committed to contributing to long-term social, environmental and economic benefits in the Northen Quebec/Eeyou Istchee communities where we operate and where we do business.

In celebration of National Aboriginal Day, Éléonore would like to recognize our valued partnership with the Crees and celebrate all Cree employees and partners.

We're proud of our strong collaboration with the First Nations communities and the legacy we're building together for generations to come.

A Resource Mine Une mine de ressources J D"nopo-du jija D"r J jonrajo-du

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THANK YOU — MERCI — MEEGWETCH

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Wemindji to celebrate 55th with music festival

The Cree Nation of Wemindji has announced that it will celebrate the 55th anniversary of its relocation to the mouth of the Maquatua River with a music festival this summer.

Featuring a wide variety of artists and groups, mostly from Aboriginal communities, the festival will take place July 18-20 at the Mawabou Gardens Arena.

Headliners include Winnipeg Boyz, Derek Miller and David Hart. Other performers include Innu singer/songwriter Florent Vollant, Attawapiskat's Midnight Shine and the Fort George Rockers. Actor Adam Beach will be hosting the event.

Tickets for each day are \$40 for adults, \$20 for youth and \$10 for children or Elders.

Correction

The Nation would like make note of a correction to the article "Power struggle heats up" on page 10 of Volume 21-15. article The claimed that Wyapschinigun Fund (also known as the Heritage Fund) would be worth up to \$50 billion once all of the funding from the Paix de Braves agreement is delivered. In reality, the fund is expected to be worth \$3 to \$6 billion in 38 years. The full corrected version of the story can be found online at www.nationnews.ca/powerstruggle-heats-up-boc-cdc

We regret the error.

Golf Tournaments

With temperatures on the rise and fairways greening up, golfers across Eeyou Istchee are hitting the links once again. The following is a list of Cree golf tournaments and benefits that may be coming soon to your local course.

With some tournament dates yet to be announced, the list is sure to grow in the coming months. If your tournament isn't found below, be sure to contact us (news@nationnews.ca) with the details so that we can add it to the list.

Quebec Native Women's 8th Annual Fundraising Golf tournament

June 13 - Caughnawaga Golf Club Contact: Jennifer Brazeau, 450-632-0088

CreeCo

June 19 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or Contact: Blanche Awashish, 418-745-3931 golf@boc-creeco.ca.

Cree Nation of Chisasibi

July 3 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or

Contact: Johanne Pash, 819-855-7275

Oujé-Bougoumou Golf Benefit

July 10 - Club de Golf, Chibougamau Contact: Randy Bosum 418-745-2519 golf@ouje.ca

Mistissini Stanley Longchap Golf Classic

July 17 - Club de Golf, Chibougamau Contact: Ryan Petawabano, 418-923-3248; 418-770-1421 cnmgolf@hotmail.com

Washaw Sibi Eeyou

July 24 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or Contact: 819-732-9409

Eastmain Golf Benefit

August I - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or

Contact: Keneth Gilpin, 819-977-0211

Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee

Association

August 7 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or Contact: Sydney Ottereyes,

819-753-7075

Lac Simon / Tehegan Golf Benefit

August 14 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or

Contact: Paul-André Cheezo, 819-736-4501; 819-860-8146 paul.andre.cheezo@lacsimon.ca

Pikogan Golf Benefit

August 15 - Club de Golf l'Oiselet, Amos Contact: John Mowat, 819-732-6591 ext 2225

Friendship Golf Benefit

August 15 - Club de Golf, Chibougamau Contact: Wendy Maloff, 418-748-7667

Waswanipi Golf Benefit

August 21 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or

Contact: 819-753-2450 ext 229

Nemaska Golf Benefit

September 4 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val-d'Or

Waskaganish Albert W. Diamond Golf Classic

September 21 - Club de Golf Belvedère, Val d'Or

Contact: Charles J. Hester, 819-895-8650



feature



Abel Bosum's parents Lucy Bosum & Cyprien Caron

Cyprien Caron & Abel Bosum

Photo Courtesy of Irene B. Quinn

Photo Courtesy of Irene B. Quinn

By finding my dad, Cyprien, I found myself

by Abel Bosum

My mother, Lucy Bosum, wept as she heard the decision of my grandparents. The answer was "No!" My biological father, Cyprien Caron, had proposed to marry my mother, but my grandparents could not overlook the clash of their cultures and languages. They could not conceive of this union being a possible match for my mother. My father, discouraged to learn of the decision, walked away from our little village never knowing what their futures would have in store. Sadly, shortly afterwards, and perhaps it was due to his troubled and distracting thoughts, he had an accident in the mine where he worked near Chibougamau. He was ambulanced to Quebec City.

This took place in the 1950s, when it was virtually impossible for my mother and father to communicate with one other. The village was really an informal settlement without a real address, so mail was not an option. To travel between Chibougamau and Quebec City was unthinkable in those days as the roads were very rudimentary, and gradually people in the village assumed that my father had passed away.

When a young woman bore a child in the traditional Cree culture, the Elders would

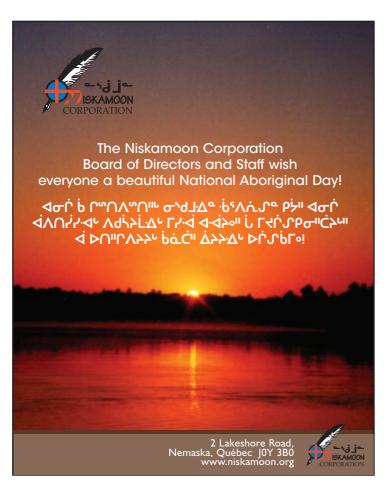
arrange a marriage between couples. It was a lot about surviving and having the means to raise the child. It was much less, in past times, about romantic love. So it was that my mother met her husband, Sam Neeposh. This was the man who raised me until I was I4 years old, and I have always been grateful to him. But I grew up knowing he wasn't my biological father.

Cyprien Caron returned to Chibougamau two years later and learned about the marriage. If his intention was to once again try with my grandparents to win my mother's hand, his hopes were quickly dashed when he realized that it was too late. He had to accept the decision of the Elders and the reality of the marriage, and he had to move on eventually leaving the region with everyone believing that he would never be seen again. I grew up never knowing my biological father – until 53 years later.

Reminiscing over the years about my childhood, I recall the feelings many times of not having a biological father. My mother would talk about him in passing from time to time and I often wondered what he looked like. It was very hard for me to talk to my mother about my father. I was afraid to ask



Family Reunion: Reggie Bosum, Irene B. Quinn, Cyprien & Rejeanne Caron, Sophie H. Bosum, Abel Bosum, Curtis Bosum & Nathaniel Bosum, Reggie Bosum, Irene B. Quinn, Cyprien & Rejeanne Caron, Sophie H. Bosum, Abel Bosum, Curtis Bosum & Nathaniel Bosum







her questions probably, realizing in hindsight, because I was afraid of the answers I might get.

I would envy my friends when they talked about their special moments - even their ordinary moments - with their dads, listening to the fathers brag about their sons on killing their first goose, their first moose or the first bear or bragging about all kinds of accomplishments. You see, in the Cree culture you are marked as a good hunter by your ability to learn at a young age to bring home game to share with the family or with the larger community. I pretended that I didn't care about these things, but deep down I wished I could have had just one such experience with my own father - just one of those special moments, someone to brag about an accomplishment of mine.

I know that my mother spoke to Sophie, my wife, about her relationship with my father. I am grateful for that. I suspect that they had their secret conversations.

The search and eventual connection with my father is a script made for the movies. Many people helped shape this part of my personal story, all of whom I will be forever grateful to. One summer day in 2008, a new chapter in my life was being written. Sophie had been in Chibougamau earlier that day with one of my grandsons when a Cree Elder approached her and said he had just seen my father in the shopping mall. Sophie dropped what she was doing and ran to the mall, grandson in tow, to catch a glimpse of this man.

Unfortunately she did not find him but this was the spark for the search of a man I knew very little about. We started to ask people in the community about their recollections of my father, more specifically, if they remembered his name. Many told us it was an unusual name, a hard one to remember. I went back to Henry Salt, the Elder who initially spotted my father in the mall to see if he could help. Henry suggested I try to locate an elderly man in Chapais by the name of Mr. Caron who he thought might be

for me. As I walked away with this name on a piece of paper, I had a feeling of hope. I immediately shared the name with Sophie and my daughter, Irene, still not quite clear on the first name as I could not make out Mr. Caron's cursive writing. Irene quickly took to her computer that day and started an online search.

At 4 am the following day, my cell phone would not stop ring-



Great Grandsons Trevor Bosum and Liam Quinn with Cyprien Caron

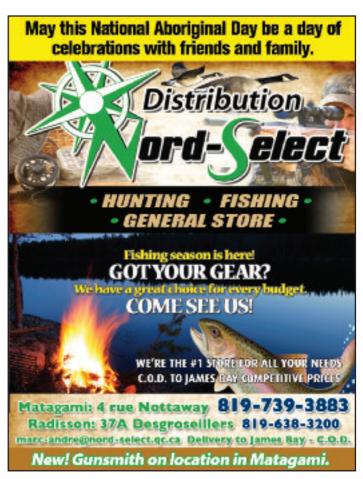
related or might have known my father from the past.

I found Mr. Caron who I guessed to be in his 70s and I introduced myself. I asked him if he knew my biological father. He looked up at me and asked if I was an Indian. I replied, "Yes I am, my mother is Cree." He quickly told me it was impossible, that we couldn't be related. I couldn't get myself to leave his doorstep. I had a feeling that this was the key I had been looking for. I continued to ask him guestions about his family, names of his brothers who may have worked in the region in the 1950s. As he started naming them, one name stood out to me and I asked him to write it down

ing. I finally answered it to hear my daughter's excited voice on the line. I remember her telling me she found a man by the name of Cyprien Caron living in Oka, Quebec - 45 minutes from Montreal, the city I spent lots of time in for work. She proceeded to tell me she also found a photo, which she emailed me and asked that I take a look at it in the morning when I woke up. Needless to say, I could not sleep after that life-changing phone call. I began to feel emotional, frightened to be taking this next step as it was becoming all too real way too fast.

I decided to get up and I started to roam the Montreal hotel







where I was staying, my mind racing. Excited and nervous, I decided to drive to the address that Irene had located not knowing what I was going to do when I got there. Disbelief set in as I drove to Oka, thinking that my father could be so close. I parked my vehicle nearby and decided, for lack of a more gentle word, to "stalk" Mr. Caron.

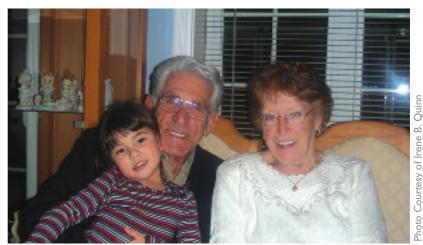
While waiting I decided to tell my children what I was doing. Despite their warnings of this possibly being illegal, I felt I had no other option. I was so close and I suddenly felt a longing to see him in person.

After 53 years, although from a distance and only for a brief moment, I finally saw him for the first time as he stepped out of his home with his wife.

Later that week, I approached Mabel Herodier of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services and asked for her advice. She suggested I speak to Marcel Villeneuve, a consultant to the Health Board. who suggested I engage a communications specialist for these types of family situations. Marie Dequier of Granby, Quebec, agreed to take on my case. So the process began of finding a way to communicate with Mr. Caron. It took about three weeks. Throughout this time, and even though my family initially tried to dissuade me from the idea, my whole family got involved taking turns stalking Mr. Caron and his family.

After many attempts, it was on August 9, 2008, that Mrs. Dequier reported to me that she spoke to Mr. Caron, who confirmed knowing my mother Lucy and was ready to meet me. The magnitude of this revelation was both momentous and overwhelming.

Then came the days leading up to the eventual meeting with my



Great Granddaughter Kristin Quinn, Cyprien & Rejeanne Caron

father. These were very unsettling moments that made me feel like a young boy again. I was experiencing strange feelings that I had never had before, and I was in turmoil. I did not know how to react, I did not know what I would say and I certainly did not know what I would do when I met him. I was nervous, afraid of the unknown, I could not relax and I could not sleep. I could not stop thinking about him and what our encounter would be like. I had a lot of questions, everything from wondering where he lived, what he did in life, was he healthy, did he have a family and do I have siblings?

On a deeper emotional level there were questions like: Did he love me? Why didn't he try to connect with me? Will he accept me or reject me!

The day we finally met was at his home in St-Joseph-du-Lac, on August 19, 2008, at 3 pm. I was very nervous and excited all at the same time. It was like being in a dream. During my career, I have met prime ministers, premiers, Nobel laureates and international dignitaries. Yet this was to be the most important meeting of my life. Do I shake his hand or do I hug him? As I approached him, he

reached out to me, hugged me and whispered, "My son, I am so happy, I love you!"

When we got through the introductions and we were in the kitchen we were like kids, sharing stories of our past, joking, laughing as if we had known each other for a long time, hugging and smiling at each other. That was an evening I will cherish for the rest of my life!

I shared with him stories of my life growing up and the wonderful family I was blessed with. Sophie and I showed pictures of our children and grandchildren. I explained the different occupations we held in our communities. I explained my role with the Cree Nation and with Aboriginal issues in general.

Thinking back on the time I had with my dad, I can now say that many of the longings I had as a child were finally fulfilled. We went fishing on Lake Mistissini; we went deer hunting at his camp; we watched my son, Nathaniel, race at the Montreal Olympic Stadium; he visited my family in Oujé-Bougoumou, Mistissini and Waswanipi. We spent birthdays and other family celebrations together. We held hands and we hugged each other every time we met.



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As the years passed I could see that we had similar interests in life. I realized that I was like my dad in many ways. Of course, Sophie would attribute my stubborn character to him as well as my love for the environment. Others saw similarities in our facial features and posture. There were comparisons with our work and various achievements in life. Some said they saw similarities in generosity and compassion for others.

Most importantly, we forgave each other. We forgave each other for the 53 years of missed connection and missed opportunities. In our own way, we made our "peace agreement." I understood how hard it must have been for him to keep a secret from his family and friends for so many years and I knew that he was finally at peace with himself when he could reveal that part of his past

and release the associated emotions after holding them in for so long. And I think he understood how hard it was for me growing up without a father. Cyprien became a really good friend and I respected him. I had a father, a real dad.

I was deeply saddened when I heard the news that my dad was hospitalized with pneumonia. I once again had very mixed emotions. I had compassion for him not wanting him to be ill and not wanting him to suffer. At the same time, there was anger in my heart.

My dad was possibly going to leave me again and I would once more be deprived of a father. I had taken a risk to open myself emotionally and now the consequence would be another loss. But after discussing my feelings with Sophie and with my children, in the end I found peace in my heart realizing that I was, in reality, very fortunate. I was one of the very few people who ever got a second



Father & Son Hunting: Cyprien Caron & Abel Bosum

chance to meet the father they always longed for.

As I sat in his hospital room, I watched the clock tick away. Our moments together were ticking away too. I would lean over and listen to his heart tick away and for my own selfish reasons I prayed that it would not stop ticking. I believe my prayers were answered with the extra days I spent with him. I spent most of my time with him in those final days trying to remember how we spent our time together over the previous six years and questioning myself about

whether I did enough to express my feelings towards him.

Over the course of the brief years we had together, he answered the most important question I had for him. Yes, he loved me unconditionally. And he also loved my family and he showed it at every possible opportunity toward my children and grandchildren. My family is very happy and fortunate to have had the privilege of knowing him,

to spend some of these six years together, to enjoy life together and, of course, to get to know each other as family. Just as it was important for me to know who father was, it was also important for my family to know who their father-inlaw, grandfather, and great-grandfather was. Realizing that brought us all closer.

This was all I every really wanted, for him to fill the void in my life.

Cyprien touched

my life profoundly and that of my family. Yes, I am grieving now, but it is because we had the courage to find each other and love each other. Grieving only happens where there has been love. That is the way life is.

"Cyprien, it broke my heart to lose you but you did not go alone, a part of me went with you the day God took you home. In life I love you dad and in death I love you still, in my heart you will hold a place no one could ever fill!"

By finding my dad, Cyprien, I found myself.

Devotions to Dad

Three Crees talk about life, love and learning from their fathers

by Amy German

For most of us, Dad was the first man that we really get to know and love. He was often our childhood hero and the man we rushed home to every June with our homemade Father's Day cards.

Whether or not this is an apt description of your relationship with your father, come Father's Day just about everyone thinks about their fathers and grandfathers or the person that was most like a father to them. And, from these men, each of us has garnered different things.

In celebration of Father's Day, the *Nation* sought out three Crees from different walks of life to discuss their most cherished memories of their fathers and what they will carry in their hearts from these men for the rest of their lives. On behalf of the *Nation* magazine, happy Fathers' Day.

Kathy Shecapio Management Consultant Oujé-Bougoumou

My Baba is the kind of person who would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it because he knows he can always hunt another and nature will provide. His faith in how life will always provide keeps things happy in tough surroundings where money is always scarce.

As a child I watched him distribute food to many, over and over again. Yet, we never went hungry. He is a respected hunter and wise speaker but he is also very humorous. I don't recall ever seeing him sad, except when there was the loss of a departed one.

He also never comes up with a quick answer, unless he is poking fun at you, but you know he will think about the question you pose to him and it's always so simple and makes tremendous sense. He reminds me to keep things simple and that overthinking causes more hurt than it brings solutions.

From him I have learned to pursue my own solutions by trusting that things will work out. He managed to instill a great confidence in me in trusting my own instincts and to trust what comes from my heart. He never ever told his daughters they were pretty but he

had a way of doing things that let us know we are beautiful.

For example, he would say that his friend was asking if I was his girlfriend and that thought is so ridiculous that I couldn't help but burst out laughing. I like having moments like this with him because he is so playful.

Every time I spend a little time with him brings so much to my life. I always feel safer, grateful and wiser. I have always enjoyed listening to his views on life and how everyone is just like us. That we are one (people) no matter our

colour or creed and this has always made so much sense to me.

I would have to say that the moment that stands out most of who my father is to me, is one of those times when he is distributing moose meat to Mistissini and Oujé-Bougoumou Eenouch.

Throughout the day people kept coming and we were sitting in the tent. I was beside him from a play break with other kids on that bright sunny and festive day at our camp. It was then that I noticed two men whom I had overheard speaking ill of my father previously during a school week. I was within



Kathy Shecapio and her Baba in Mistissini, January 2013

earshot of their conversation at the time in Chibougamau.

As my Baba (always) notices my body language and so perhaps I gave them a silent, but dirty look that he may have seen as he has never been one to miss beat from me.

Later on, I asked him why he had given those men moose when they had been unkind to him.

Like always, he didn't answer quickly but he took a moment, turned to me and said: "You know, all people have problems and we don't always know what they are going through." It was a simple answer but it hit home.

I understood that I was quick to judge and that I would have to a bigger person, that life was bigger than my thoughts, perhaps kinder than the thoughts I had entrained. He gets me, my Baba. I trust him.

The most important lesson that I have learned from him is that I can do whatever I want no matter how hard it seems and I will achieve it because life will provide.

I don't often call him about a problem but when I do, just knowing that he has he heard me always it makes things better. I need him.

Something that he always said to me was "Suuk schooloo" ¬(work hard at school and keep going). He knew an education was what I would need to make it in the changing world around us. Later on, his words changed to "Suuk Apitse, miyosuu inn kaa dotiminn" (work hard, what you are doing is good). He compared my work as a manager to that of distributing food to the people. He knew I missed him all the time and those were his only words to me on that subject. He is wise.



Ashley's dad with his grandson Daniel Ethan

As for my own children and how my father has impacted my parenting, they would know that answer to that better than I would, but I do try to impart the undying knowledge of letting them make their own mistakes and being their pillar in return.

When it came to raising my kids, he taught me to be kind towards their mistakes and that they would figure things out by learning and to let them learn. He also said never hit them. A hit child will only understand the hurt and forget the lesson.

Ashley Iserhoff Former Deputy Grand Chief Mistissini

Whereas there are a lot of things that stand out in my history about my father, the time in my life that always comes to mind is when my family faced one of the most challenging times when my younger brother Matthew was hit by a garbage truck at the age seven.

It happened on May 8, 1987. I was about II at that time and we were living in Montreal. That first week after it had happened, we were so unsure of what was going to happen to Matthew. However, my father showed us that even though things may be hard in life, you could always find ways to help each other and keep abreast of what is going on around you.

My father is my role model in life. Despite how hard things were at that time, he went on and managed to exercise every day because this kept him healthy and kept him going and I am still doing this today because I learned it from him. I carry this.

My brother was in the ICU for 46 days, then in a regular hospital bed for another three months and then he went spent another six to eight months going through rehabilitation in another facility. He didn't come home until the following March.

Through this however, my parents kept our family together despite how difficult it was to watch their little boy go through



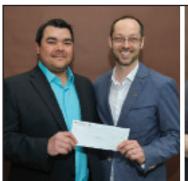
Happy National Aboriginal Day!

National Aboriginal Day was established to celebrate Canada's First Peoples and our important contributions to Canada. It is also an occasion to celebrate and highlight our unique aboriginal cultures, languages and traditions.

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Jamie-Peter Pashagumskum, student in the certificate in Administration, receiving his scholarship from Mr. Vincent Rousson, Val-d'Or Campus Director.



Pauline Lameboy, student in the certificate in Administration, receiving her scholarship from Mrs. Francine Fontaine of WSP Canada.



Sarah Voyageur (Management and Regional Development), Pauline Lameboy (Administration) & Kristen Iserhoff (Management and Regional Development), all three students in management sciences, receiving their scholarships from Christine Desrochers, Human Relations Agent at UQAT.

HUMAN CREATIVE VISIONNARY The Fondation de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue and the Corporation de développement de l'enseignement supérieur de la Vallée-de-l'Or recognized four Aboriginal students as recipients of academic scholarships, for the excellence of their academic record, their involvement in the community and their courage in returning to school.

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something like this and they really did their best to keep things as normal as possible for my other younger brother and myself.

Every morning my dad woke us up to go to school. As a young person back then I would be annoyed to have to get up at 5:30 am as it took me an hour and a half to get to my school but the things that my father would do (to make this better) made me appreciate him so much.

When I look back at this now I know that we wouldn't be where we are today, speaking the way we do or living the way we do without them. My father kept our family together.

My parents also always gave a lot to others because my dad has always told me that when you give, good things will come back to you and he is living proof of that.

His life has resonated this and because of it, my brothers and I have always been able to do things to help others and hopefully the stuff that we have done has had an impact.

My dad was one of the first Crees to get a university degree (in the 1970s) and when we moved back to Montreal my mom was supposed to finish her degree in education. But one of the biggest reasons why my parents moved there was that when I was going to school in the communities I was being bullied. They sacrificed their careers here to move to Montreal for me.

What my father has taught me in life is that no matter how hard a challenge may be you must find ways to continue what you are meant to do in life, no matter what. My father taught me this and has continued to teach it to me over and over again, every day. He is a man that exemplifies love.

Roger Orr Singer-songwriter Chisasibi

My father wasn't around when I was very young. He left us when I was about three years old and so I hardly remember him from that time when I was very little and growing up in Fort George. For that matter I have no idea as to where he was at that time.

My father is actually originally from Scotland and so this makes me Métis but I was raised by my mother, my grandfather and other family.

My dad worked as an agent for Austin Airways and later stationed himself in Pobungnituk, which is near the tip of Hudson Bay and so he was able to invite us up there to visit.

Prior to that I always felt strange around him when he used to come and visit us in Fort George when we were kids, but we would only see him for about a half an hour when he would be passing through and then move on.

When we started visiting him too it still felt strange until this one time when we went up, I guess it was because my parents were trying to patch things back together, but we went for a visit, my mom, my half-sister Natalie and I when I was between the ages of 9 and 11.

I had really wanted to go hunting and so when my dad finished work one day, he took us to a dead end of the road and went over a hill to a big lake. As we walked along the edge of the lake, we saw these ducks far away in the distance on the calm water.

He loaded the .22 and gave it to me and I shot and hit the duck with one shot. My dad sort of jumped and looked at me and said, "Good shot, my son!" It was at that moment that it hit me that it was the very first time that I had every heard anything like that in my life. I felt his energy and his excitement as this was also the first time I had ever felt anything like this from my father. This moment had a lasting impact on me and became the new foundation for our relationship that was to come.

While there may have been no quantity of our time together then, the quality of that moment made up for everything. What we do with that time that we have with our own children as fathers is so important.



Roger and John Patrick Orr

In the years following that he moved to Whapmagoostui and then to Val-d'Or, situating himself so that we could have better access to him. We would stay with him when we could and when we would go down and do Christmas shopping and things like that.

He did what he could to make up for the lost time. This helped me a lot. I would always think about it that way, (time with him was) quality over quantity.



oulful song goddesses, cutting-edge rappers, precocious kids, metal dudes, scribes of prose and poetry, rockers with a cause, unlikely hiphop heroes and community activists are some of the labels for Eeyou Istchee's newest superstars; the youth whose voices, songs and souls made it to N'we Jinan, a new Cree album made with the help of David Hodges.

Hodges, a Montreal hip-hop artist and youth worker, set out on a project just a few months back in collaboration with the Cree Nation Youth Council to do workshops in every community on

music and sound recording while getting members from each community to record portions of the same song called "N'we Jinan."

What happened, however, was entirely unpredictable. Hodges raves with tales of the unbridled talent he discovered and young Crees who managed to record not one but 19 songs an album that has shot to #1 on iTunes' hip hop chart in Canada.

Speaking to the Nation about the project back in March, Hodges explained how a booking error actually wound up being fortuitous as working in the youth centre instead of the school led to meeting many talented youth right off the bat.

Though Hodges usually presents his workshop in schools as he did in many of the Cree communities, had he not shown up on a PED day, he most likely wouldn't have met the many young Waswanipi artists who changed the course of this musical journey.

"I was supposed to show people how stuff was done in the studio and in my music videos but then when people started rolling in, I met so many rappers, singers and musicians that there was just too much talent in the room to not say, 'Let's create some music.'



"And it was Waswanipi that set the tone for the entire tour and that is 100% the truth. I didn't know what the tour was going to be like or how it was going to unfold. We would just set up and find out where the talent was in the community and go from there, figuring out different ways to get that talent to come out to where we were," said Hodges.

Lightening struck twice in Waswanipi, where Hodges recorded two incredible songs with the community members: "There is A Way" with Jonah "JayLyfe" Cooper, Selena Neeposh, Joy Kitchen, Tristan "T-Bone" Blacksmith and Alexandre

Blacksmith. The second song was "Always Believing," featuring JayLyfe Cooper, Tom Polson, Nakonee and George Ottereyes.

Hodges' next stop was Oujé-Bougoumou, but the community proved to be a greater challenge. Upon arrival Hodges discovered that the place was literally a "ghost town," as there happened to be a hockey tournament going on elsewhere.

"We came in and did a performance for the kids in the school to promote it, but we didn't get a lot of interest from them. We ended up with only two kids who were interested that we picked up," said Hodges.

Putting his ear to the ground to find out just who had it going on when it came to song, the community buzz was all about Kim Neeposh, the chief's daughter who lives in Gatineau, but just happened to be in town that day.

As luck would have it, another guitarist who was attracted to the project knew Neeposh and was able to get her on board to work on a musical project.

"Kim is a very vibrant and vocal person with a real edge to her character as she is really into hip-hop. She knows what she likes and I couldn't tell her anything beyond what she already knew about herself and so she was a really interesting person to talk

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to. Everything that came out of her mouth was passion about music, a want to be a leader and a desire to do music but never having the opportunity," said Hodges.

The result of Hodges' stay in Oujé was Neeposh's hardcore hiphop track, "Who's Rez Is This?"

Also recorded in Oujé was "For the Nishiyuu Grandchildren" with Brenda St-Pierre and Israel Bosum-Diamond.

Next on the tour was Mistissini. According to Hodges, it was Mistissini that would change the face of the whole trip as it was at this point that the word about the tour had reached the rest of the communities.

This was partly due to the fact that shortly after arriving in Mistissini, Hodges met former Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff, who became a champion for the project and kept publicizing it via social media. It also had a lot to do with the video work that Hodges and his crew did there.

In Mistissini, Hodges met Angel Baribeau, a young teen with an incredible voice who recorded the track "Never Let Me Go" along with Roger "Cool Breeze" Neeposh, Joylene Brien, Patrick Loon and Kenneth Longchap. The video of Hodges working with these young Crees soon became a YouTube sensation and was picked up for national TV coverage.

"Never Let Me Go" brought the former Deputy Grand Chief to tears.

As momentum for the project built, parents also caught the fever. They encouraged their kids to take advantage of the opportunity at get creative.

In Mistissini Hodges gave a young Cree the chance to take over as producer for a track because he felt that Jason "DJ

"This was my first experience scrambling eggs next to a skinned beaver that was being cooked."



Arrow" Swallow had something new and spectacular to offer.

"He is so talented that I told him that I really wanted him to produce the next track. He came in and produced it with guitarist Noah Cheechoo, a youth worker who is into heavy metal. He came in and we just sent everyone out because this was the night for the older guys. We spent from 11 pm until 2 am just creating this song and finalized it on the spot after 3-4 hours of work," said Hodges. The result was "Smash Bros," a track of metal-infused hip hop that has since become widely popular.

Moving further north, Nemaska wound up being one of the most

productive stops on the trip as it actually generated three songs for the album.

None of this could have happened however without the help of Cree rap duo, the NorthStars, comprised of Elton Salt and Gary Joly, two individuals who Hodges described as leaders among the youth as well as musicians and rappers who were really trying to do their thing.

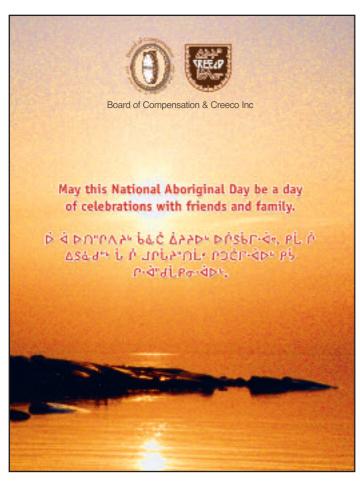
During the Nemaska visit Hodges and his partner found themselves in a scheduled morning power outage without having had the time to shower or eat. Not knowing what to do, they followed the advice of other community members.

"It was like survival of the fittest. We were told that there was a place where people could just go and cook for free and this was where we met everybody. The NorthStars were there as were so many other people from the community. This was my first experience scrambling eggs next to a skinned beaver that was being cooked.

"I had a sudden epiphany about how we were all turning off technology and connecting around this fire. We didn't need it at that moment to persevere as people and to communicate," said Hodges.

This would later serve as songwriting inspiration, once the power was back on. Meeting later that day with Salt and his stepsister, the motivation for the music came from having such an organic experience with the people of Nemaska.

In Nemaska, Salt became the first performer to record his lyrics in Cree, something Hodges had hoped for.





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By the end of the Nemaska visit, Hodges left with three tracks: "New Generation" with Salt, Tonya Jolly, Tanya Wapachee and Keith Lacroix; "Alright Then" with Salt, Lacroix, Gary "Maestro" Jolly, Tyra Tanoush, Precious Jolly and Isiah Wapachee; and "Put My Love In You" with Salt and Geraldine Wapachee.

In Waskaganish, Hodges was anxious to meet and work with cherished Cree gospel singer Francine Weistchee. He managed to track down Weistchee and tell her that he was honoured to meet her – to which she laughed – but Hodges did not end up recording with her.

Instead Weistchee wound up talking to Hodges about her children, in particular her daughter Neesha Shecapio who did end up participating on the album.

"When I asked her what 'Waskaganish' meant, she said that it means small house. I thought that was such a great concept for a song, because our souls and our characters are like a small house and we have to open the doors to share who we are with the world.

"So what we wrote about was how we are like Waskaganish and we want to share who we are with the world. We want to open our doors and share what this culture is about," said Hodges.

That track, called "Small House," features Neesha Chanan-Shecapio, Shaidean Mianscum and Ronita Kitty.

While in Waskaganish, Hodges also met Miranda Blueboy, another well-known singer in the community. Sitting down to see what would come out of a session with her, Hodges said a unique gospel song began to emerge.

Later on in Wemindji, Hodges met Joshua Iserhoff again, with whom he had planned the whole project. After playing the gospel track, Iserhoff added his own vocal tracks, adding even more depth to the song. The end result was "Looking To You."

Also recorded in Waskaganish was "Wolves", a track with Jake Turner, an incredible guitarist who had just moved to the community a day earlier. Turner's guitar work would later be used on various other tracks.



"Wolves is a song about being a wolf and coming together in a wolf pack and us becoming the hunters," said Hodges.

Moving on to Eastmain, Hodges said what stood out the most about the community was the vibrancy of its rambunctious youth, particularly a cute eight-year-old named Mallory Gilpin.

"She literally attached herself to me, followed me around and did everything that I was doing. She became like my sidekick while I was there," said Hodges.

Gilpin would later become one of the youngest performers on the album, singing a verse on "Rolling Down James Bay" along with Junior Cheezo, Marvina Cheezo,

Daisianne Moar, Shania Moses and Jordan Herbert.

The song has become one of the standout tracks because of its bluesy flavour, a sharp contrast to the hip hop/urban tone of most of the album. This "traveling song" was written for all the Cree who so often find themselves on the road.

"We ended up passing around the mic and keeping it very blues-oriented. We did group vocals about 'rolling down James Bay' and then everybody individually got a verse. We even got Mallory, my sidekick, on it. We gave the mic to whoever wanted it and had some of the shyest kids open their mouths and have their voices on it," said Hodges.

Also recorded in Eastmain was "It's All About," a track that literally emerged from the discussions that Hodges had with the youth that day. "The song is about the things that are going on in the community, with the youth expressing their emotions based on the struggles of everyday life," said Hodges.

"It's All About" features Jesse Mayappo, Saraly Hester, Julianne Mark, Jonathan Matt, Selena Weapinacappo, Tina Brown, Bruce Gilpin, Claude Weapinacappo and Junior Cheezo.

In Wemindji, Hodges recorded two important tracks: "Paint the Hills," a reference to the English translation of the community's name, and "Creespect."

"We did 'Creespect' because that was what one of the kids wanted and though everyone laughed at him, I told him that it was the best concept ever. The song was about respecting your Elders and respecting the land and the kids were so down with that concept," said Hodges.

The track "Paint the Hills" features Roselyn Matches, Christian "Wizard" Stewart, Roberta



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Le 21 juin, célébrons la Journée nationale des Autochtones!

Cette fête a un caractère hautement symbolique pour les communautés autochtones. C'est l'occasion pour elles de fêter, d'exprimer leur sentiment d'appartenance, d'honorer leurs traditions et d'affirmer leur fierté.

Profitons de ce moment pour souligner l'apport significatif des Premières Nations et des Inuits à la riche vie collective du Québec, à sa diversité culturelle et à son histoire!

On June 21. let's celebrate National Aboriginal Day!

This day is highly symbolic for Aboriginal communities. It's an opportunity for them to celebrate, express their sense of belonging, honour their traditions and affirm their pride.

Let's take advantage of this moment to underscore the significant contribution of the First Nations and Inuit peoples to the rewarding community life of Québec, its cultural diversity and its history!

Geoffrey Kelley

Ministre responsable des Affaires autochtones

We wish everyone a Happy National Aboriginal Day! And to all students and teachers. have a great summer. Enjoy!



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Hughboy, Whitney Miniquaken; while "Creespect" features Jeremiah Mistacheesick, Silas Katapatuk, Nathaniel Vaillancourt, Christian Stewart and Leslie Mayappo.

In Chisasibi, Hodges said he had an incredible experience as he got to work with Sigoun Wapachee, a young girl the local youth kept calling a "Cree Rihanna."

While Hodges was trying to track down Wapachee, he met Cree Rising, a popular local band that has opened for numerous traveling acts that have played Chisasibi. Together they wound up working on an instrumental that would become the foundation for the song done with Wapachee.

"She is just so talented, it's insane! There were so many other rappers who came out but it was her that wound up just carrying the song. That song is called 'I Believe' and it's arguably the most commercial on the album," said Hodges.

After weeks on the road and track after track of musical gold in the bank, a weary Hodges finally made it to Whapmagoostui only to

have what he described as one of the most meaningful visits on the tour as the community is known for its traditional culture.

While Hodges spoke about the energy of the community's embracing youth, the other advantage that he had was finally getting to work with Juno-winning artists, CerAmony, made up of Matthew Iserhoff and Pakesso Mukash.

It was actually at Iserhoff's behest and careful guidance that Hodges was able to rap in Cree for the song "N'we Jinan", the track he had originally set out to record throughout the communities. While he struggled with the language, Hodges said he did the verse phonetically. Iserhoff's musical magic did the trick. "That guy can do everything," Hodges enthused.

Also recorded in Whap-magoostui was "Nishyiiu and Me," a track that Hodges sought to turn into a "masterpiece," if only because he had wanted to give every kid who wanted to work on the track the opportunity to do so.

"There were two girls who were really like the gifts of the community, Jade Mukash and

Maggie Sandy Jr. Maggie is a really shy girl who wound up being interviewed by CBC while we were there, but she was so intelligent and beautiful and when she stepped out into the studio she was harmonizing as though it was just innate to her. Jade had an arts background and was also such a great singer. Jade helped us wrap up the song and brought it to a whole new level," explained Hodges.

Hodges said it was Iserhoff and Jade Mukash who finally completed the stellar track with a memorizing chant that ultimately gave it an addictive quality.

Since finishing the tour and releasing the track on iTunes, it has not only become a hip-hop chart-topper but also the pride of the Cree nation, showcasing what was once very unknown talent to the world.

All of the proceeds from the album are going into a fund to bring Hodges back to Eeyou Istchee for another tour next year to see just what kind of gems emerge when these youth step into the studio once again.



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Traditional history in bloom

A Mohawk-led walking tour explores the traditional uses of plants and trees

by Jesse Staniforth

There aren't many people – especially people from Eeyou Istchee – who think of Montreal as a place where nature flourishes. Even Parc Mont-Royal, known to locals as "the Mountain," is less of a natural place than a carefully tended park teeming with joggers and mountain bikers.

But Montreal preservation group Friends of the Mountain hoped to change the way some citizens understand the nature in their midst with "Mount Royal Flora: The Forest and the Human Story," a walking tour of the Mountain's plants and trees that took place May 9.

Friends of the Mountain member Éric Richard and Kahnawake Faith-Keeper Darrell Thompson, who explained the traditional uses of the Mountain's natural bounty in Mohawk culture, guided the tour. The hike up the mountain began with an introduction by McGill's Aboriginal Administrator Outreach Kakwiranó:ron Cook, who was accompanied by both his Elder father and his infant son.

When French explorer Jacques Cartier turned up in 1535, Montreal was then known as Hochelaga, a thriving community of 3,000. Behind a wooden palisade, the village contained 50 longhouses, and outside its walls, the community foraged for fruits, nuts and medicine in the woods and cultivated fields of the Three Sisters: corn, squash, and beans. Cartier himself described the land surrounding the Mountain as "ploughed and very fertile."

Historians aren't sure where the village was, but agree that it

was someplace in the vicinity of the present-day site of McGill University. The Nation wasn't Mohawk, as many might assume, but was actually a people that the Europeans called St. Lawrence Iroquoians – one of about a dozen communities who spoke Laurentian Iroquois.

By the time Samuel Champlain arrived in 1608, the St. Lawrence Iroquoians of Hochelaga were gone. There is great argument about what happened; some histo-



Darrell Thompson and Éric Richard in front of commemorative white pine.

rians contend that were wiped out by intense battles with the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) League, the Huron (Wendat), or by various Algonquin Nations. Some blame European diseases. Others caution that it serves the interests of French colonial history to say the St. Lawrence Iroquoians simply "disappeared," and that it is more likely that the group dispersed into other Iroquoian com-

munities for safety from both traditional foes and arriving Europeans.

Few Montrealers are aware that their city sits atop the site of a previous community, so the Friends of the Mountain began their walking tour with a 20-minute lecture on the history of the place, and the gradual shift in control of the land from Aboriginal communities to European settlers. With the rise in European domination, locals came gradually to forget that the Mountain had been a place that provided food and medicine for hundreds of years.

The Black Walnut tree, for example, was not originally native to the region, explained Richard, but was most likely transported here from the area now known as southern Ontario by Iroquoian people. Nuts were an important part of their diet, but as Thompson was quick to point out, the nuts' skins can also be taken with water as a kind of detoxification diet at the end of a winter.

Wild leek, sugar maple, red pine, willow, white pine and many other wild plants and flowers used for centuries all still grow on the mountain, and have traditional uses likely unknown to the average Montrealer (who, the organizers cautioned, should not pick plants for medicine on the Mountain, since the city is too populous to provide enough for all). Their sap, bark, buds, fruit and ashes can be used in many different ways, Thompson explained.

"You have to have a clear mind when you gather herbs," he said. "They won't be shy if you're in the right place."



☆♂VJÁÀゼ' ☆『ՐՐÞÁÞゼ' ▼ @∩Ĺ⊃ゼ° (ÁÞゼ Þ'Ր) Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Happy National Aboriginal Day

"ational Aboriginal Day was established to celebrate Canada's First Peoples and our important contributions to Canada.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee). It is important to honour the young Cree leaders that were asked by community elders to lead the fight during the negotiations of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement. May their experiences serve to guide and inspire Cree youth and others in similar circumstances.

The Cree Nation has been on a journey toward Indigenous nationhood. This journey has been characterized by intense struggles against the introduction of massive hydroelectric projects on our traditional territory without consultation and without our consent. It has been a journey to ensure that our rights would be respected in the context of potential Quebec secession from Canada, and it has been a journey of constantly improving the living conditions in our communities.

More than anything else, our journey has been one of demanding respect for, and acknowledgement of, our basic human rights, our aboriginal rights and our Treaty rights. We have fought for our rights in the courts, in the market place, on the international scene and at the negotiating table.

Our journey is one which has been guided by a vision of our Elders and our previous leaders to become "masters of our own destiny" and to reclaim our self-reliance as an Indigenous Nation. We are well on our way to realizing that vision, and we call on our Cree people, especially our youth, to make a contribution toward Cree nation-building, and to keep the vision alive.

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Standing in front of a small marsh area in the woods of the Mountain, where the runoff from the winter's snow collects, he pointed to the bark of the white willow tree.

"When you have problems, you come to the willow tree. Willow trees are famous for taking heaviness away from you. You know that saying, 'Hug a tree'?"

"Do you have to hug it?" asked a young boy on the tour.

"That's just a figure of speech," laughed Thompson. "But the willow is famous for being what they make Aspirin from. Our people use it too. You scrape the top layer to get to the inner part. You take handfuls and you boil it in a pot. If you have a headache, drink a cup, or if you're achy, you can bathe in it. It takes the pain away. When you've got problems, a bath in willow removes a lot of stress. You would not believe how good you feel."

The walk ended at the site of a white pine planted in 2001 to 300th commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the Great Peace of Montreal. between the French settlers and 40 Aboriginal Nations drawn from the Iroquois Confederacy as well as Huron and Algonquian Nations. Because the needles of the white pine come in bunches of five, Thompson explained, they represent the five Nations original Iroquois Confederacy living in peace with one another.



Kakwiranó-ron Cook and his son, with his father (right) and Darrell Thompson at beginning of mountain walk

"But the white pine is also about health, welfare and longevity," he continued. A branch the length of a man's forearm simmered for no more than 20 minutes in a gallon of water, Thompson said, "will provide medicine for just about anything. It's good for heart because it builds elasticity in your arteries, and it's good for the skin. It keeps you looking young."

Speaking afterward, Thompson said he wanted both to encourage descendants of European settlers to see the value in the nature around them, and to bring young Native people back to their cultures. He was especially dismayed at young people who had no taste for their culture's traditional food (like, he suggested, boiling the ashes of red oak with hominy corn, then adding beans and squirrel, deer or moose meat, for a meal exploding with calcium and protein).

"The problem is when our children are given those old foods, they won't go that direction," he

said. "Right now there's so many who won't follow that diet. They only know MacDonald's. So when you bring them to a ceremony and give them the traditional foods, it's the strangest food in the world to them, because they've never been accustomed to it."

Too often, Thompson said, people think of the natural world as a distant supermarket, infinitely renewing itself for them so they can have as much wood, paper, meta, and minerals as they want without consequence. He cautioned that his purpose was to warn city-dwellers away from that attitude.

"If I could have everybody understand the value of nature, and understand what it means to clear-cut and exploit nature, that's what my goal is," Thompson said. "For everyone to learn that once it's gone, it's gone. It just doesn't fall back out of the sky and reappear again. I'm trying to integrate that awareness to all people everywhere, to take care of nature. We need it for our grandchildren."



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Sustainable forestry in Eeyou Istchee

Cree Nation wants an industry respecting its values

by Émélie Rivard-Boudreau



NDP MP for Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Romeo Saganash, and Ted Moses, president of the SCNATE, at the conference

About 200 people attended the Working Together Sustainable Forestry conference May 27-28 at the Forestel Hotel in Val d'Or. Organized by the Secretariat to the Cree Nation Abitibi-Témiscamingue Economic Alliance (SCNATEA), the event gathered representatives from the Cree Nation, the forestry industry, the Quebec government and the training sector. Conferences and round tables about issues, challenges and opportunities of sustainable forestry in Eeyou Istchee showed that conciliation Cree values with the industry will create economic opportunities, but that many steps need to be undertaken by different industry interests.

Ted Moses, president of the SCNATEA, said the conference is

an opportunity to create relationships in the forestry industry.

"It's not like Hydro-Québec or the mining industry where the ice has been fully broken, where we are working together and where we are making a lot of achievements," Moses observed.

The presentations made clear that the industry offers an abundance of opportunities beyond simply trucking logs out of Eeyou Istchee. Topics explored included business alliances, labour requirements and training in the forest industry, tourism, the use of biomass and accessing markets for nontraditional forest products. "It's more than just making a two-by-four," said Moses.

But among the speakers, some thought it important to

remind the conference of the historical events that marked the Cree Nation with the forest industry. "When you hear someone, when you get to know them, you know where they are coming from, their concerns... you can also express where you stand and it makes it easier to create partnership," remarked Moses.

Cree History and Forestry

Now the NDP MP for Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Romeo Saganash helped draft the chapter on forestry in the Paix des Braves as a negotiator for the Cree. He told conference participants that the 2002 agreement made a difference.

"The forestry companies, now, accept to deal directly with the Cree trappers. It is automatic now. Whereas, prior to that, it would never happen," Saganash said.

"The Cree have always believed that the forest industry must follow directions in different agreements to the letter. To do that, we have to sit down together. There are and will be challenges that we have to face."

Saganash also raised a controversial comment by new Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard during the recent provincial election. On March 8, Couillard promised that, "I wouldn't sacrifice a single job in the forest for the caribou," he told the newspaper Progrès-Dimanche.

"The premier said that no caribou will stop the work, there will be problems there," Saganash vowed.

During the Wednesday's luncheons, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, Matthew Coon Come, also pointed out important issues about Eeyou Istchee's forest through history. He recalled how, in the 1980s and 1990s, many forestry disputes arose between the communities, the Quebec government and forest industry. These disputes were to have been settled by the Paix des Braves.

Now and to come

To encourage forestry development with better benefits for the Cree, a committee formed by Ministry of Natural Resources, the Cree Nation Government, Emploi-Québec and Cree Human Resources Development (CHRD) hired a firm to make an exhaustive portrait of forest industry in Eeyou Istchee.

The report concluded that getting Cree people more involved in their own forest development is complex but can be done with specific efforts. Among the recommendations, it is suggested that communities must ways to creating more businesses and/or partnerships, obtain training for Cree workers and stimulate entrepreneurship.

"It's everyone's responsibility," said Guy Hétu, Regional Director at the Ministry of Natural Resources for Nord-du-Québec. "Each one can see how he can improve the situation in its own mission."

In the following months, each organization of the group will look at the portrait and will assure a follow-up on specific points related to its competencies. After, an action plan will be built to revive Cree's forestry development.



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Disputes growing in the forest

Matthew Coon Come warns of new legal fight over management plans

by Lyle Stewart

The Cree are facing a new battle in the forests, according to the Grand Chief of the Crees.

Speaking at the conference on forestry in Val d'Or May 28, Matthew Coon Come made it clear that disrespect for hardwon achievements in forestry in recent years is leading to new disputes that may once again end up in the courts.

At the top of the list of irritants is forest-company contravention of the Baril-Moses Agreement. Signed in 2002, the Baril-Moses Agreement extended many of the forestry provisions of the Paix des Braves agreement to Cree traplines located east of the "height of land" in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region.

As Coon Come told the conference, Quebec successfully applied the Baril-Moses Agreement for a number of years.

"But for reasons that are unclear Quebec stopped applying this agreement in 2010-11," Coon Come said. "Instead, Quebec unilaterally began applying a so-called 'eco-system' forestry management approach without meaningful Cree consultation and without taking into account the Cree trapline system."

Coon Come said the decision amounted to the same error Quebec made in the 1980s and 1990s to disregard the Cree traditional land tenure under the trapline system – a decision that led to a number of court actions that were finally resolved in the Paix des Braves agreement.

"The result of Quebec's unilateral decision has been significant overharvesting, and in some cases, clear-cutting on the affected Cree family territories which overlap with the Baril-Moses territory," denounced Coon Come. "This has destroyed wildlife habitat and made it impossible for the Cree to carry on their traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities in the affected territories."

And he made it clear that the matter is heading for the court system.

the Lac-Saint-Jean region last year over non-consultation with the Cree whose traplines are affected by company operations. An FSC certification ensures that timber products come from responsibly managed forests and draws higher prices on world markets. A Resolute representative was in attendance at the conference, and even won a draw for a chainsaw.

"The Cree will do what it takes both to protect the land, the forest, the wildlife and our way of life and to ensure meaningful Cree participation in the forestry economy."

"Despite protracted discussions with Quebec, no resolution has yet been found. We have therefore had no option but to take legal proceedings to protect Cree rights. We view this situation as very regrettable, and contrary to the generally positive relationship that exists between the Cree and Quebec," Coon Come said.

Notably, disrespect for the Baril-Moses Agreement also was the underlying factor in the Grand Council's successful challenge of the Forest Stewardship Council certification of Resolute Forest Products operations in

Jobs and Bill 57

The Sustainable Forest Development Act (Bill 57) established a forestry management system that doesn't reflect the Adapted Forestry Regime of the Paix des Braves, Coon Come notes. That's why the new Cree-Quebec Governance Agreement calls for negotiations to harmonize the two, and to establish a collaborative forestry management regime on Category II lands.

"Discussions have taken place and are quite advanced, but a final push is needed to conlcude the necessary agreements," Coon Come reported. "This is a question of political will, and I invite the responsible authorities at the government of Quebec to work with the Cree to bring this matter to a speedy conclusion."

Another disappointment is that the promise of the Paix des Braves of jobs and contracts for the Cree in forestry has not met with the same success as in the energy and mining sectors. Coon Come emphasized that the Cree are ready to work with government and industry to devise solutions for jobs and contracts "that respect Cree rights and are sensitive to the environment."

The way forward

One reason underlying the lack of jobs is the structural challenges facing the forest industry in Ouebec.

These challenges, Coon Come observed, "have nothing to do with the Cree, although the Cree are suffering the negative impacts."

Instead, the underlying problem is overcapacity, which leads to overharvesting of resources. Coon Come said the solution was identified in the Coulombe Report of 2004: consolidation and reduction of capacity in the forestry sector. But little has been achieved to implement this solution, he noted.



"We know that capacity reduction is not an easy sell politically. But the time has come when we must all recognize that there is no alternative. Business as usual is not an option," Coon Come said.

"Eeyou Istchee is our homeland, and we have no other. The Cree will do what it takes both to protect the land, the forest, the wildlife and our way of life and to ensure meaningful Cree participation in the forestry economy."

Broadback

Another element for harmonious relations in forestry is the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan, which would cover 13,000 square kilometres of intact forest in Waswanipi territory. The plan would provide two levels of protection: one consisting of park and protected area designations fully protected from industrial development. The second would serve as special management buffer zones.

"These zones will seek to establish a balanced interaction between people and nature to maintain and restore the natural integrity of the landscape," Coon Come said.

"Implementation of the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan would do much to assure the Cree that government and industry are serious about working with us to protect areas of key importance for the Cree, the wildlife (including woodland caribou) and the traditional Cree way of life."



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am the son of the late Isaac Dixon, one the greatest hunters who ever lived. My father and grandfather taught me everything there is to know about the Cree world, what it means to our being. Both were born in the wilderness and grew up there before a single road came around. Dad met mom on a portage and my siblings were born out there.

Even from the time of "beaver preserves," trapline W-23-A of Waswanipi has been used year-round. There were times we let the land rest. But as we speak, smoke is rising from several chimneys of trappers' cabins at Windy Lake, the true home of the Dixon family and of other members of the Waswanipi community.

A short Cree history: The wagon trails with horses came through before the railway and gravel roads. Nobody bothered to knock, they just walked in. Our ancestors were there from the

beginning, ready to work in non-Aboriginal forestry and mining. It was a sad experience. Crees were seen as a threat, taking over jobs, and this didn't sit well with the newcomers. Crees were living right at the job sites in clustered shacks and tents. Companies had whole families at their disposal.

We became Cree hunter-workers, trying to take advantage of both worlds. My late father and mother started logging with a buck-saw and piled logs during the night under a bright lantern. Some white officials did not like this, and neither did some Crees want to face this new reality, saying we were being used to further the ambitions of self-serving newcomers.

Slowly, but surely, the settler society started arriving with families and small machinery. Then gradually, the bigger and heavier machinery was needed. Suddenly, many Crees were out of a job; the

natural resources on our homelands now belonged only to a few. The rest is history.

Around 1990-91, we were finally forced to leave the land. Income Security Program I became a part of our lives because non-Aboriginal forestry operations were moving in without prior notice, and they were here to stay. For most Cree trappers like myself, this was the beginning of the end of our life in the quiet woods.

Many moons ago, I helped launch a campaign to rally fellow Crees against forestry, because it threatened to destroy the Cree way of life. That campaign culminated in a \$500 million lawsuit against the Quebec government and about two dozen forestry companies in 1998. The suit contended the province's entire forestry regime was illegal and unconstitutional.

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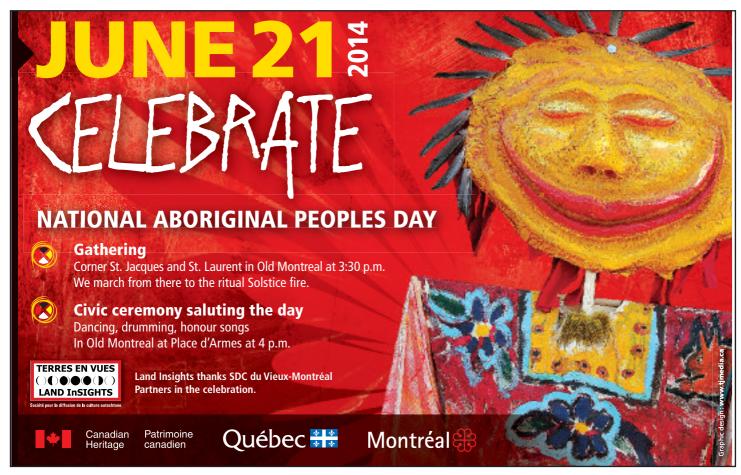
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In 1999, Judge Jean-Jacques Croteau issued a preliminary ruling siding with the Crees. The stunning judgment spurred the provincial government into agreeing to negotiations with Crees that lead to the 2002 Paix des Braves agreement (PDB).

The PDB was an out-of-court settlement and Waswanipi trappers were not happy. We lost a very good chance to tell stories of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and non-Native forestry companies. We could have educated the public and forced governments and academia to research the environmental impacts of extractive industries on Cree lands and waters. We could have identified the best practices to avoid polluting watersheds or damaging land-scapes and wildlife habitats.

Many problems with forestry companies remain. Cutting one tree in someone's backyard makes a difference, but they scalp our hunting backyards. This has to change. We trappers never sold or gave away our rights to our ancestral lands and waters to anyone. We did not ask to be poor, get trampled on or to be displaced.

Since the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975, two rivers are now gone, the dams with their roads and other extractive industries are real. But all Cree hunters are still living like beggars and squatters on their ancestral lands in the midst of so-called "sustainable development."

Simply trying to gather firewood in logged-out areas cuts into our hunting time. We compete with non-Aboriginals for sandy firewood, what little is left. We also go further in search of traditional food. The beaver population is declining. Barely two beavers are now found in lodges that used to house up to nine. We're forced to travel across barren lands, with much more wind and more difficult visibility. Before logging, trees sheltered our ancient hunting trails, making nighttime travel easier and safer. But no longer.

Tallymen, trappers and their families are humble, quiet and sharing people. Foreign and disrespectful people can easily intimidate them. They do not know the outside, "dog-eat-dog" world as other Crees do. When we defend our way of life, it includes language, history, land, resources and survival. It would never occur to us to hold out our ancestral lands for ransom, but this is what non-Native extractive industries are doing very profitably – after trampling and displacing the Cree population of those lands.

Along with family members, I as a tallyman would like to test the JBNQA and the PDB, taking a single trapline to court. Trapline W-23-A has the most non-Aboriginal sport-hunting camps in Waswanipi or anywhere else in Cree territory. We're just demanding a

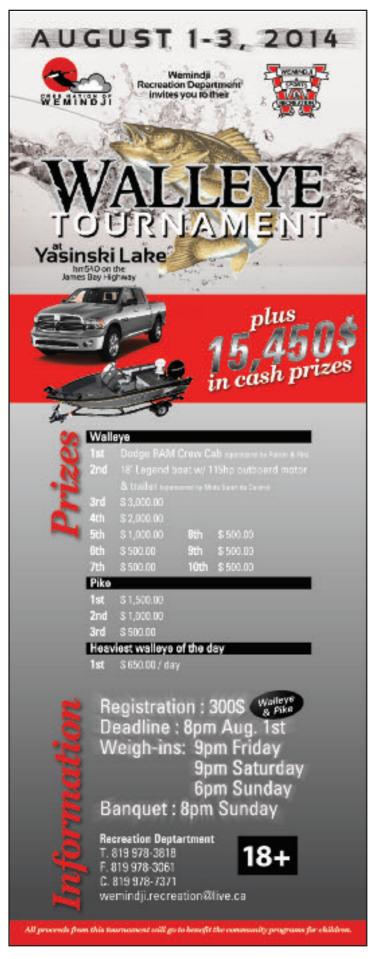


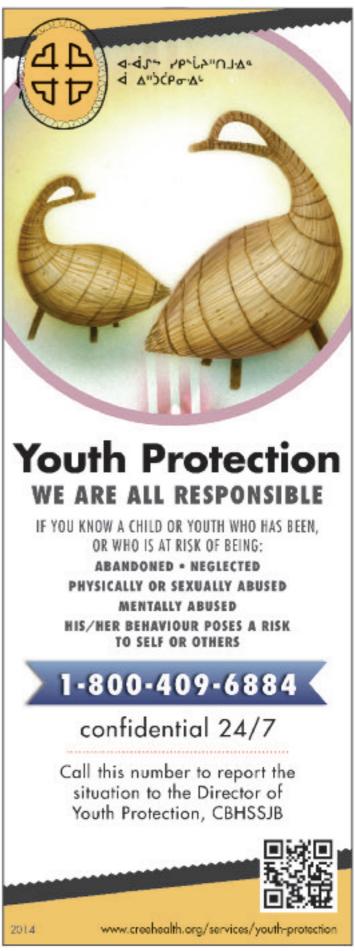
Paul Dixon holds an ornamental seedling display from the sustainable forestry conference in Val-d'Or as he stands in front of a a tracked tree harvester of the type he says is devastating the health of his family's trapline.

little more respect as Aboriginals with a land-based culture.

Crees have ancient knowledge of the land, water and all wildlife passed down through the generations, more than any non-Aboriginal encyclopedias can hold. This knowledge, taught to us by our Elders, belongs to all Crees, and we do not want this to be lost.

We have documented the winter destruction of wildlife, either hibernating or sheltering in dens or cavities in the snow. Winter forestry operations are going non-stop, 24 hours a day, with steel-tracked,





oil-leaking machinery. Creeks and riverbeds are being destroyed during night operations because they are not noticeable in deep snow. Operations are rushed and log transport has to race against time to beat the spring thaw. Machinery parts and tires and waste wood are simply left behind.

Who then lives with this mess? Cree trappers of Waswanipi and other inland Cree communities.

Deep ruts made by heavy machinery make land travel harder. They are filled with polluted water and oil. Wildlife simply leaves the area. Trees and vegetation left standing either perishes or is blown over because all plant roots are interconnected. That leads to erosion. And the pollution eventually drains out to the main watersheds.

Trail-making and traveling by ATVs and snowmobiles is made difficult and dangerous, especially in winter under a light snow cover. Costs from damage to our equipment and vehicles come out of our pockets, not from the forestry companies that caused the damage. Snow melts faster in logged-out areas, stranding us at our hunting camps.

The MNR and companies must understand that there are different types of impacts in summer, fall, winter and spring operations. We hunt and gather year-round, and at the same time we monitor any wildlife activity and the lack of it. Winter is our peak-trapping season for furbearing animals and the wild meat is for human consumption.

Non-Native forestry companies have damaged or completely destroyed ancient Cree hunting tails, portages, traps, snares, camping areas and landings in a 1200-square-kilometre area (W23A of Waswanipi). We have to start all over again. Companies don't necessarily follow cutting plans and a request by a Cree trapper – "I just want to survive in the quiet woods" – is met with a laugh.

The fisher, marten, lynx, fox, mink and weasel all depend for their diet on an abundance of small rodents or mice. But these humble animals are the last things on the minds of heavy-machine operators

before cutting down forests in winter operations, when escape is impossible for small rodents.

Summer operations destroy bird nests and eggs and kill young hatchlings. Aside from many bird species, wildlife found in seclusion of mature wood stands or mixed stands of coniferous and deciduous trees include: moose, tundra/woodland caribou, black bear, timberwolf, coyote, Canada lynx, fox, fisher, pine-marten, beaver, river otter, mink, skunk, weasel, muskrat, flying squirrel, red squirrel, chipmunks, hare, porcupine, groundhog, raccoon and the rare wolverine.

Most animals are predators and any disturbance in the forests would have a chain reaction effect. Fish habitats and spawning areas are either disturbed or destroyed by logging operation and road crossings. Culverts are often installed on rivers at narrow passages where ancient spawning grounds are found. In crossovers, if a logging road with small culverts does not do any damage, the busy beavers will follow up with their dams. This prevents fish from swimming upstream. Culverts give support to beaver dams, causing stands of stagnant water in treed areas. And of course, every road means a new portage for those traveling the river by canoe.

In logged-out traplines, what little wildlife that is trapped is either smaller or unhealthy. Fur is sun- and wind-damaged and sells for less at fur market auctions. I've been a licensed fur buyer on behalf of our community for over 19 years. With detailed reports, we can easily prove forestry has a very negative impact on traplines and captures.

As more roads are built and trees are cut on our ancestral traplines, the more our way of life of subsistence hunting and gathering is affected. Cree hunters and trappers are losing their right to properly feed their large families on healthy, traditional food. Then we are manipulated into putting our destiny into the hands of self-serving non-Native "sustainable development." This is the Cree reality.

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MOCREEBEC COUNCIL OF THE CREE NATION

On September 24th, 2014 the Quebec Court Challenge filed by MoCreebec in 2004 against section 3.2.7 under the James Bay Agreement was officially discontinued. The discontinuance paved the way for Grand Council and MoCreebec coming together and committing their efforts to work jointly in finding political-driven resolutions to resolve MoCreebec matters and concerns. To be clear, the MoCreebec court challenge on section 3.2.7 was a lawsuit, but it was never about money, rather it was a lawsuit challenging legal interpretation of a law as it pertains to the "ten year clause". But as stated the court case is behind us now and is put aside in favor of a political process.

The political will going forward is to unite and work together instead of being against each other in the court room. As Bill Namagoose, Executive Director of the Grand Council states; "...by joining forces the Grand Council and MoCreebec will sit on the same side of the table and work together as a team in dealing with issues and difficulties MoCreebec have had in accessing JBNQA benefits."

Three years ago, while in Toronto attending the Assembly of First Nations conference, I met up with Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come at this same meeting, I told him then that "MoCreebec wants to participate in Cree Nation capacity-building." The Grand Chief responded quickly and assured me, "...we'll find a way to make it happen so MoCreebec can be involved."

A political process is certainly a preferred path to take in resolving issues for it gives a better opportunity and chance in a win-win outcome for both sides. Whereas a court action, while it may serve its purpose at times, is more unpredictable, because either you win or you lose.

Ultimately however, the successful outcome of a political process depends largely on the good will of its participants who must be committed to foster and promote open dialogue, serious discussions, good honest debate and negotiations in order to arrive at a mutually acceptable arrangement. In this case, it will require the support of all Cree citizens whether you are a political leader, an employer/employee, an everyday housewife, a youth leader etc. It is good if everyone's voice can be heard and respected on whatever issue is being dealt with. Cree Nation capacity-building is a collective journey! It involves all Cree with no one and no group excluded.



Acting Chief ALLAN JOLLY

MoCreebec has come a long way since the association was established back in 1980. MoCreebec offers a variety of programs and services designed to serve the MoCreebec community, in areas such as health, housing, employment, education, and communication.

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Run for your life The Mistissini Runners' Club leads the trend in Cree physical fitness

by Jesse Staniforth



The first time I ever went for a run, it was because my runner girlfriend dared me to do it. She told me to set the pace and said she'd catch up to me; in about 10 seconds she told me I had to slow way down. I cut my pace in half, and she said, "No, no. You have to do it way slower than that if you want to last more than two minutes."

With her guidance – running a few minutes, then walking a minute – I was able to keep going for 20 minutes, the longest run of my life. I won't lie: the next day I felt like a truck had backed over me. However, part of the dare was that I would run five times, with a one-day break in between each outing. The second run started out sore, but as soon as I got warmed up, I felt fantastic. My girlfriend kept slowing me down, but I kept saying to her, "I can't believe how good this feels! I always thought running was torture!" That was I0 years ago and running has been a part of my life ever since.

That kind of experience is one that the Mistissini Runners' Club hopes to introduce to even greater numbers of locals with its weekly meetings (from 6:30 am to 7:30 am, every Tuesday, at the Track and Field). At the moment, about 10 people come out to run with the group every week, but organizer Cindy Pressé hopes those numbers will increase.

Pressé, who moved to Mistissini from Montreal three years ago, holds a Master's degree in Applied Physical Activity and coordinates the Cree En Forme programme to encourage physical fitness in the community. The Runners' Club has existed for three years, and even though her contract in the community ends in July, she wanted to make sure it continued this summer.

"I'm here until June 30. I really wanted to keep going with it because there are people who like it," she said. "What's nice about walking is that it's a tradition here, and people really enjoy it."

Wally Rabbitskin is a Planning and Programming Research Agent for Mistissini Public Health – and he's also well-known as a competitive marathon runner, who came in third overall in the 1998 Ottawa Marathon, and has repeatedly finished number one in his age group



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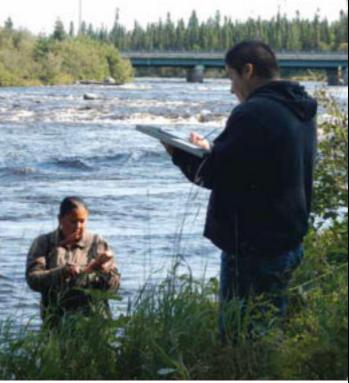
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in the Montreal and Toronto marathons. He said Cree people used to run a lot more than they do today.

"Traditionally," he said, "I think some people did run. In the past, a lot of people who were out hunting walked on snow-shoes, and I think they ran sometimes when they had to pursue an animal. People walked whenever they needed to get wood or hunt. Nowadays it's different: our communities are different."

Like they do in most other places, people in the Cree Nation often have jobs that keep them sitting behind a desk. At the same time, non-traditional foods full of sugars and starches are everywhere. The result has been the rise of obesity and diabetes – and with those problems has come a new interest in physical fitness never before seen in the Cree Nation.

"A lot of people are trying to get into a healthier lifestyle," Rabbitskin said. "I think that's a reason why [people have become more interested in running]. Also there's a lot more information from the Public Health department trying to convince people to live a healthy lifestyle. So people are hearing these messages on the radio and in newsletters, and I guess they're acting on them."

Pressé knows that people coming to the Runners' Club aren't serious athletes, so she tailors the group to meet the needs of everyone who comes out.

"Different people will come, though it's not always consistent," she said. "It might not be the same people every week. The distances are pretty short. The people who come are not runners. They like walking and running, and having a coach there to be with them."

Instead of getting everybody going at the same speed, she prefers to instruct the runners and walkers to go at a level of effort (like "run or walk for a minute at an effort level of eight out of ten") that's personal to them, and means something different to everybody.

"Some people who are faster can go faster," she said, stressing that the club is open to people of all speeds. "We start with a 10- or 15-minute warm-up, since people sometimes come late. Then we'll do a bit of dynamic stretching, and then I give a set. For example, one minute of brisk run followed by two minutes of an easy jog or walk, times 10, for 30 minutes. Some people might just walk really fast for a minute, then go really nice for two minutes to relax and shake it out. Other people might really sprint for that one minute, and then the two minutes take it at an easy jog."

And even if the same crowd isn't guaranteed to show up week to week, she's excited to see the group's Facebook page is active, and often club members will approach her and ask her to write them running sets for them to do on their own, or appeal to other members of the club to write sets as well.

However slowly, the trend for physical fitness seems to be taking off. Pressé says that even in the three years she's spent in Mistissini, she's seen interest in running on the rise – as well as interest in cycling.

"Traditionally, I think some people did run. In the past, a lot of people who were out hunting walked on snowshoes, and I think they ran sometimes when they had to pursue an animal."



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)

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"My first summer here cycling wasn't as big," she said. "Now, you'll see elementary school kids biking on the main roads with their parents in the car behind them with their flashing lights on. I cycle a lot myself, and from my first year to this year, [I've noticed that] cars have really gotten careful. They move out of the way or even switch lanes if they see you. People are really considerate. I feel really safe."

Pressé noted that an upcoming project for Cree En Forme is to start a cycling club in Mistissini similar to the Runners' Club to help make physical fitness even more popular.

"Compared to a couple of years ago, when a lot of people didn't really exercise, nowadays more and more people are walking, or doing some physical activity," said Rabbitskin. "It's something that's coming up slowly. We would like to see more people go out there and walk. We'd like to see different organizations and entities promote physical activity within their workplaces - to encourage their employees to be physically active and healthy. Even giving time to employees to go out and walk, just give them the opportunity to exercise."

He noted that 30 minutes to an hour of walking a day offers huge health benefits and can help fight obesity, diabetes, and heart diseases. Plus one of the things that makes the Runners' Club attractive is its social aspect.

"People can meet other people, and associate with their friends and with different people," he said. "We also try to encourage families to go out and do activities with their children. They're the role models for the children. If your children see you exercising —

whether it's walking or running – they want to do it."

Alongside the running, Pressé noted that other forms of fitness are taking off. Late this spring, the community paid to train eight locals as personal trainers, and already three are giving courses.

"There's one class at lunch, for example. I'm really trying to develop local people to be the ones running the program," she explained. "It's a process. It isn't

classes!' One of the people who just got trained is doing a women's fitness class for beginners, so I can tell them to try that class – it's perfect because it's basic, it's only women so they'll feel more comfortable, and it's in the morning. The first week is free. It's a great start. But it's up to them to have that motivation to show up."

Rabbitskin reminded new runners not to get too excited about starting out. "Don't push yourself

"Start slow, and if you feel pain or tired, it's a good thing to stop and rest for a while before you begin again."

just getting [certified] as a personal trainer, so you're ready to teach now. Some don't feel comfortable teaching people, so it helps to be there to remind them of things: do the warm up, the main set, don't forget the cool-down, remember to keep talking to people. The pedagogy about it is something that's missing, and I hope I'm giving them confidence. That's my personal goal of something to give back to the community."

But above all, she wants to get people comfortable with the idea that they can get in shape and enjoy themselves doing it. Many people approach her telling her they'd like to lose weight or become better fit, but she says it's often hard to find the will-power necessary to come out for that first workout.

"There's saying it, but then there's actually doing it. I can tell them, 'Fantastic, there are fitness at the beginning. Listen to your body," he said. "When I first started running, the first couple of days were pretty hard. My bones were aching. So I listened to my body and the only time I'd go out and run was when I felt really good. Afterward, though, it was something that really helped me. If you're doing it every day, eventually your body is used to the activity. Start slow, and if you feel pain or tired, it's a good thing to stop and rest for a while before you begin again."

Pressé encouraged potential exercisers not to feel intimidated by their limitations.

"Diabetes and obesity can be factors that keep people from even participating sometimes – people think they're too big, or that it might hurt them. But it's all about one step at a time, and one day at a time."



am dazzled by the starry night sky. I have always taken a great comfort in looking up at the stars. When I look up to the heavens and the greater universe I find a perspective of the world that has kept me grounded and aware of my place in life. I discovered this reality as a child. As an adult I continue to look upward and I always feel humbled when I spot a point of light that is 500 light-years away and totally out of my reach.

When I was young and living on the James Bay coast, my life felt like it was disconnected from a greater world. My friends and I saw all of the images of great cities, towns and endless highways in movies, television shows, newspapers and magazines. It was all very alien to us. We knew there was an exciting world out there that we could not be part of because it was just so far away. The realization that we could not participate in such an interesting, exciting and faraway world gave us all a great sense of isolation.

I yearned for some way to escape the dusty roads and confusing life on my landlocked First Nation. I found this escape in the school library where I devoured book after book. My favourite reading had to do with space, the planets and the stars. The deep void of space was an awesome concept that enchanted my imagination as a child. My newfound knowledge was made even more exciting because I lived in a remote part of the world that had little light pollu-

tion and that meant I could view the heavens easily. On cold clear winter nights, I can remember looking up at the stars and being able to see faint points of light all the way down to the horizon. I literally felt like I was standing on the edge of the planet.

The more I read about our place in the greater universe, the more I felt that in a way, our tiny planet is just as isolated from everything in the cosmos in a similar way that my small Native reserve in northern Ontario is so removed from the outside world. I found some comfort in discovering that our planet is merely a small speck orbiting the sun, which is actually a star that is roughly I.3 million times bigger than Earth.

As I read more about the accumulated knowledge of our universe, I found it fascinating to know that as we orbit our sun, all of us are traveling on earth at an astonishing accumulated speed of 390 kilometres per second towards the constellation of Leo. I was amazed at the ideas of space, time and distance in my reading. Things in space are so far apart that one way of measuring the distance of celestial objects is by the use of the light-year – the distance light can travel in a year – equivalent to 10 trillion kilometres. That boggled my mind.

The reading expanded my appreciation of just how vast the universe is. It amazed me to discover that our sun and its solar system occupied a

place in a small corner of our Milky Way galaxy. We sit about three quarters away from the centre, in a galaxy that measures about 100,000 light-years across and is made up of possibly 400 billion stars, many of which are actually stars with planets. Our home galaxy is only one of possibly 100 billion other galaxies that are millions of light-years away in all directions of our observable universe. What lies beyond is currently unknown. Now that's big.

So these days I make sure to get out at least a couple of times a week to light a campfire and sit back to stare up into the starry sky. The knowledge I have gained from my reading of science and astronomy over the years really helps me to appreciate the majestic sight of the universe.

As technology improves I am thrilled to discover new ways to connect to the cosmos. I have downloaded apps on my iPad called Sky Guide or the Canadian-made GoSkyWatch Planetarium to help me enjoy my stargazing. They provide detailed information about the stars, constellations, deep-sky objects and even satellites that orbit our planet. I have even started using Flightradar24, an app that requires a steady internet connection in order to provide detailed, up-to-date information on aircraft flying overhead. The night sky is more amazing to me than ever.

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